

# **Midwest Philatelic Society**

## **Kansas City, Missouri**

MPS was first known as "Kansas City Philatelic Society, Kansas City MO and KS", as referenced in the American Philatelist, Volume VIII, Year Book of American Philatelic Association, published December 1, 1894. The Charter was issued October 22, 1894 for Branch Society #10. Eleven members started the society with F.J. Bescher resident president.

The next mention of the Society was made in February 1896 in the same publication as referenced above. "During the last year the Society has shown marked improvement, more interest in attending meetings. Society is purely 'local', all members except two are residents of the two Kansas Cities."

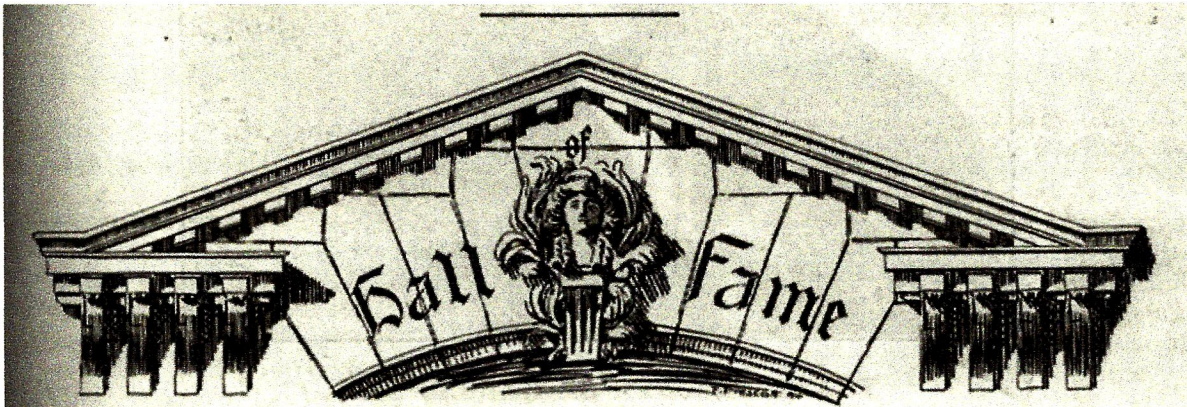
The next documentation for the name Midwest Philatelic Society of Kansas City, MO, is provided by Decree of Incorporation. Approved by the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri, at Kansas City on April 8, 1938 incorporation expired fifty years later on April 8, 1988.

Now let's leap ahead to what appears to be a name change and different founding date. At the Heart of America Philatelic Exhibition held at the Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City MO, May 24-27, 1939 a souvenir sheet depicting Kansas City landmarks The Scout and Liberty Memorial was made available by Midwest Philatelic Society. The date inscribed is 1925. You will note that this May event was the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibit of Midwest Philatelic Society.

Although research continues to provide pieces to the puzzle, we now think of ourselves as Midwest Philatelic Society or MPS. As such this remains Branch Society #10, one of the ~~four~~ <sup>six</sup> oldest in the American Philatelic Society still active today.

# Midwest Philatelic Society of Kansas City, Mo. — Early History —

From the  
November-December 1911 Issue of  
*The Collectors' Journal*  
Published by H.L. Lindquist



## Frank Bescher of Kansas City.

The philatelic career of Frank Bescher of Kansas City, is so closely interwoven with the philatelic history of Kansas City that the one can hardly be written without including the other.

The first local club was the Stamp Club of Kansas City, organized in 1889. Mr. Bescher was the prime mover in the organization but held no office. The club lived a short but useful life and passed away. Enthusiasm was

again aroused in 1893 owing to the Columbian Commemorative issue. The new club was known as the Philatelic Society of Kansas City, and was affiliated as Branch 10 with the A. P. S. Mr. Bescher acted as treasurer and as exchange superintendent. This club was composed almost entirely of business and professional men and continued for about five years.

No effort at an organized club was

again made until 1905 when in February of that year the younger element formed the Kansas City Stamp Club. A number of the older collectors joined although they made no effort to direct the affairs of the society. The membership gradually drifted to other parts, and it died a natural death in 1908.

In 1909 the present club, The Kansas City Stamp Collectors' Society, was organized, of which Mr. Bescher is the president. It is by far the best and most active stamp club that Kansas

Bescher instructing him in the intricacies of philately. This missionary work brought good returns, and Mr. Bescher was soon contributing articles to the philatelic press. The leading dealers at that time were opposed to the idea of the general sending out on approval selections, only their best customers being favored in this way, so that the young collector did not receive as much "encouragement" as he does today.

Mr. Bescher was the first Kansas City subscriber to the P. J. of A. and



FRANK BESCHER OF KANSAS CITY.

City has ever had. The members are taking an active interest with the result that they have an average attendance of from 20 to 25.

Mr. Bescher started collecting in 1882 through the advice and efforts of his mail carrier. He at that time collected birds' eggs and tobacco tags but the mail carrier exhibited to him his own collection and induced him to secure a packet and an album. This mail carrier, although advanced in years, spent many an evening with young

when Mr. Biadt's article advocating the formation of the A. P. S., was published, he wrote the same day for information and became affiliated with the society early in its career.

Mr. Bescher is a general collector but has a special leaning toward U. S. and original covers. His collection contains 18,000 varieties and is particularly strong in unused stamps many of them issued before 1882. He secured most of these by direct correspondence with P. O. officials and collectors in the

countries of issue. For a long time he was the purchasing agent for the K. C. club and when sending for stamps for the members he would secure entire sheets for himself. In consequence he has hundreds of entire sheets of many of the early British Colonials.

He seldom sells any of his stamps and outside of his collection he has a wonderful accumulation, among which are thousands of confederate covers which he personally collected through the south; several hundred dollaars' worth of unused Columbias; quantities of the 5c and 10c, 1847, etc., etc. He shows some interesting covers upon which are uncanceled copies of the 10c, 1847. He explains this condition by the fact that it was quite a common custom in the early days to have traveling friends act as personal messengers to carry letters to other friends and acquaintances.

The letters were invariably stamped and as they did not pass through the post-office they were consequently uncanceled. This may account for the many unused stamps of this issue without gum.

As an instance of Mr. Bescher's methods of securing stamps it may be mentioned that he made a special trip to Hawaii on the trail of a "find." He found it, too. He can tell so many interesting stories of his "stamp hunting" experiences, that we could not even attempt to enumerate them, but we have assurances that some of them will be written up for our readers.

In business life, Mr. Bescher is a commission merchant and has occupied sections in the city market of Kansas City for over 22 years. He takes an active part in the business life of his home city and is a prominent member of the Commercial Club.

# The Midwest Philatelic Society

The Midwest Philatelic Society is one of the longest enduring stamp collecting groups in the country. It was founded in 1925 and is still going strong today with over 50 members. Over the years the club has been involved in several philatelic happenings in the Kansas City area. Some of these happenings were commemorated with souvenir covers and labels that were created by the club. Several of these items are shown here and were a part of the collection of the late Joe Firestone.

The Midwest Philatelic Society sponsored Kansas City's major stamp show for many years until the late 1960s. During that span of years, the show was called among other names, HAPEX. HAPEX stood for Heart of America Stamp Exposition. HAPEX, hosted many national stamp collecting societies including the Trans-Mississippi Society, the United States Classics Society and the Bureau Issues Association (now know as the United States Stamp Society). In 1971, the Collectors Club of Kansas City was founded by some ambitious fellows in a local hotel bar and Midaphil was created later that same year. The members of the Midwest Philatelic Society gave their support to this show and even celebrated the society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Midaphil in 1975. From the information that I have been able to acquire this was the last time that the society issued a souvenir card or envelope. (An example is shown at the bottom of the exhibit.)

For more information about the Midwest Philatelic Society please inquire at the show registration desk. The society meets on the first Saturday of the month at the Waldo library on 75<sup>th</sup> street about 3 blocks east of Wornall.

## Chapter Celebrating 125th Anniversary

Thank you for mentioning the Midwest Philatelic Society, of Kansas City, Missouri, in the "Philatelic Happenings" column of the January edition of *The American Philatelist*.

Our name has changed over the years; however, we recognize the club as Chapter No. 10 of the APS, originating in 1893. We will celebrate our 125th anniversary this year. At one time we were the third-oldest active chapter, but I am not sure if that is still true.

**Bob Baltzell**

*Independence, Missouri*

**Editor's Note:** Ken Martin is always pleased to mention chapters, their news and deeds in his column. We have to disappoint you slightly, but among more than 470 active chapters, the Midwest club is actually the sixth-longest active chapter, according to APS records. The Chicago Philatelic Society and St. Louis club both joined October 10, 1887. They were followed by the Philatelic Society of Pittsburgh and San Francisco-Pacific Philatelic Society on April 10, 1889, and the Garfield-Perry Stamp Club (Cleveland) on July 10, 1890. The Midwest Philatelic Society, having joined November 30, 1894, is the last active chapter to have joined the APS in the 19th century.



Early history of the Midwest Philatelic Society as published in the November-December 1911 issue of *The Collectors' Journal*.

## The Way It Was...

# Kansas City's Philatelic Heritage

In the heyday of Kansas City philately, our downtown area was a great place to spend the day at one of our oldtime stamp shops.



As with most American cities, our downtown area was a hotbed of philately during a 50+-year period that flourished on into the early 1970s.

On the first Thursday and third Tuesday, the Midwest Philatelic Society—one of the oldest chapters in the American Philatelic Society—met in either the old Phillips Hotel or the venerable Muehelbach Hotel. Up to 100 collectors would turn out for the meetings...and in various years, the MPS would stage a major national stamp show.

But the delight of all local collectors was the many stamp shops available to them. One could visit stores, for instance, operated by Col. E. Albert Aisenstadt, Harry Rosenfeld, T.O. Cramer and Martin Finkelstein. On Saturdays these stores were packed with collectors, many of whom spent the entire day chatting about philately with people who wandered in.

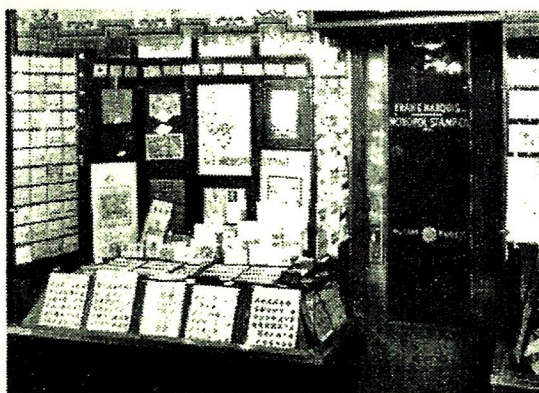
Chief among these shops was the one owned by Martin Finkelstein and his assistant, Bill McCaffrey. Located at 110 East 13th Street, this was the place for the serious philatelist. On virtually any given Saturday in the 1950s you might see Tom Alexander, the

renowned specialist in the 3-cent 1851-57 issue, working on a cross-road puzzle. Or Creighton Hart, the world-ranking expert on the U.S. 1847 issue, showing off a new cover. Or even a very youthful Randy Neil trying to cajole Bill or Martin into letting him buy the newest Minkus catalog on the installment plan.

Finkelstein was not only a good dealer, but also a very devoted philatelist...as was McCaffrey. Their shop carried a broad stock of U.S. stamps and varieties and a huge line of supplies. Finkelstein was one of the first dealers in the country to utilize the new Minkus catalog numbering system when it was introduced in 1953.

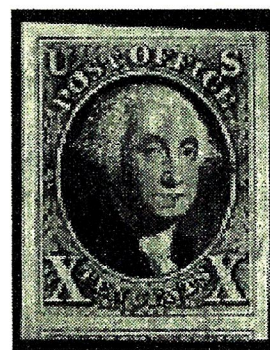
Those were the days when stamp shows and bourses were few and far between, and the stamp shop reigned supreme as *the* gathering places for collectors. But KC was not without some very good shows. In 1966, the Society of Philatelic Americans met here...and several times a year in the 1950s-60s, the Kansas Precancel Society would stage one of its big "roundups". Precancel collecting was a lot bigger in those days!

By the late 1960s, the suburban shopping centers began to siphon off the commercial traffic in the downtown area



(as with so many other cities), and by the mid-1970s, all of the downtown shops had closed. Today, KC has several suburban stamp shops, including an excellent one operated by George Townsend in North Kansas City and a large facility used by several stamp dealers in nearby Merriam, Kansas. But thanks to three very active stamp clubs, philately in our town remains quite healthy!

Of course, the focal point in local stamp collecting is the **MIDAPHIL** annual show. Generally, more than 1,500 collectors from the four-state area turn out for the event—as well as scores of important collectors from across the country. So **MIDAPHIL** is very much a part of a grand philatelic tradition in Kansas City.



Finkelstein's was the place to buy early U.S. stamps.




# Midwest Philatelic Donation to ATA

The immediate past president of greater Kansas City stamp club Midwest Philatelic Society recently contacted Executive Director Vera Felts to see if there was a worthwhile youth stamp program the club could help support. MPS is a 501c3 non-profit organization that wanted to donate some of its funds to support youth activities.

For the 2017 NTSS youth area, Aimée Devine, assisted by MaryAnn Bowman, created a wonderful Disney-themed 24-page booklet. The National Stamp Dealers Association sponsored the booklet at the show. There was a definite need for professionally printed copies, as booklets printed on the ATA office printer for the show were not of high quality. The proposition to professionally print the books was brought forward at a recent meeting of MPS. Club members were very impressed with the book and several commented that it would be great for new adult collectors also. The MPS board of directors unanimously approved making an appropriate donation once the group was presented with the cost. Then it was discovered that not quite 500 copies could be printed for the original amount agreed upon. Individual members of MPS then volunteered to match the money and the club raised the amount to ensure sure 1,000 copies would be delivered to ATA.

At a small event attended by club members, a check for \$1,770 was presented to ATA President Dale Smith, who is also a member of the club. About 10 of the club's 65 members are also members of ATA. This kind of generosity is welcomed in support of the many missions of your organization.

An image of the presentation is shown below. 



*“What’s your collecting mission?”*